



PA 18-140—sSB 188 (VETOED)

Committee on Children

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE STATE OVERSIGHT COUNCIL ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

SUMMARY: This act renames the State Advisory Council on Children and Families as the State Oversight Council on Children and Families and increases its membership from 19 to 25. It also increases the number of members that constitutes a quorum from six to 12. It replaces 13 members appointed by the governor with 12 members appointed by legislative leaders and one member appointed by the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC) chairpersons. It also adds (1) the Children's Committee chairpersons and ranking members, the child advocate, and the chief public defender, or their designees to the council and (2) certain required qualifications for the six members who represent regional advisory councils.

The act expands the council's duties by requiring it to (1) monitor, track, and evaluate Department of Children and Families' (DCF) policies and practices related to child and youth safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes and (2) submit policy and legislative recommendations to DCF and the Children's Committee on improving such outcomes. It also eliminates some of the council's responsibilities (e.g., issuing reports it deems necessary to the governor and DCF commissioner) and modifies certain other responsibilities.

Additionally, the act (1) modifies and expands the information that DCF must quarterly report to the council and (2) requires the Children's Committee, beginning by January 1, 2019, to annually report to the council information from the Children's Report Card that is relevant to the council's duties (see BACKGROUND).

The act also requires the council, by October 1, 2019, to begin annually reporting to the Appropriations and Children's committees (1) its findings and recommendations regarding DCF policies and practices; (2) information about the impact of those policies on safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children and youths; and (3) if applicable, legislative recommendations. Within 30 days of receiving this report, the committees, in conjunction with the council's leadership, must hold an informational forum on the report.

The act additionally:

1. requires the council to post its agenda and minutes on the General Assembly's website in addition to DCF's website, as already required;
2. allows the council, without state remuneration, to be staffed by an organization or educational institution with the necessary expertise and resources to assist in administering the council's work; and
3. eliminates a requirement that DCF provide the council with funding for

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administrative support services and to facilitate participation by members who represent families and youth.

The act also makes conforming changes (§§ 2-7).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2018

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

Under prior law, the council had to include 13 members the governor appointed, seven of whom had to represent young people, parents, and others interested in delivering child protection, behavioral health, juvenile justice, prevention, and other services to children and youths. The act replaces these members with 12 legislative appointees, as shown in Table 1. Under the act, any vacancy must be filled by the appointing authority.

Table 1: Legislative Appointees

Appointing Authority	Number of Appointments	Qualifications
House speaker	Two	One expert in providing services through DCF's family assessment response program; One child and youth advocate
Senate president pro tempore	Two	One expert in providing behavioral health services to children and youths DCF serves; One attorney with expertise in legal issues related to children and youths
House majority leader	Two	One former recipient of DCF in-home services or supervision between ages 18 and 25; One behavioral health services advocate serving on the Behavioral Health Partnership Oversight Council
Senate majority leader	Two	One licensed child psychiatrist; One behavioral health services advocate serving on the Behavioral Health Partnership Oversight Council

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House minority leader	Two	One former foster child between ages 18 and 25; One therapeutic foster care provider
Senate minority leader	Two	One attorney with expertise in legal issues related to children and youths; One practicing member of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

The act also adds to the council (1) a JJPOC member who is a child and youth advocate or service provider, appointed by the JJPOC chairpersons, and (2) the Children's Committee chairpersons and ranking members, the child advocate, and the chief public defender, or their designees.

As under prior law, the council must include six members representing the regional advisory councils, one appointed by each such council's members. The act additionally requires that these members be parents, foster parents, or family members of children and youths who have received or are currently receiving behavioral health, child welfare, or juvenile services.

Under prior law, the council had to select from among its members a chairperson and vice-chairperson to act in his or her absence. The act instead requires the council to select two chairpersons from among its members, one of whom cannot be a representative of the executive or legislative branch.

The act also eliminates provisions that (1) permit the council members to receive compensation for necessary expenses incurred in performing their duties and (2) require DCF to provide funding to the council to facilitate the participation of members representing families and youth, as well as for other administrative support services.

COUNCIL DUTIES

Monitoring, Tracking, and Evaluating DCF Policies and Practices

The act adds to the council's responsibilities by requiring it to monitor, track, and evaluate DCF's policies and practices regarding child and youth safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes, including policies related to ensuring that:

1. children and youths are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect;
2. children and youths (a) are safely placed in their homes whenever possible and appropriate and (b) have permanent and stable living situations;
3. children and youths receive services that are (a) adequate to meet their physical and mental health needs and (b) appropriate to meet their educational needs;
4. continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved; and

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5. families have enhanced capacity to provide for children's and youths' needs.

Budget Review and Advice

Under existing law, the council is tasked with annually reviewing the proposed budget and advising the DCF commissioner on it. Under the act, the council must additionally provide such advice to the Appropriations and Children's committees.

Outcome Measure Monitoring and Advice and Perspective on Implementing Council Recommendations

In addition to monitoring DCF's progress in achieving its strategic plan goals, as required under existing law, the act requires the council to monitor the department's progress in achieving any outcome measures the council establishes.

The act requires the council to offer assistance and provide an outside perspective to DCF to help the department implement the council's recommendations, in addition to providing such assistance and perspective to help DCF achieve its strategic plan goals, as required under existing law.

Eliminated Requirements

The act eliminates requirements that the council:

1. interpret to the community at large DCF's policies, duties, and programs;
2. issue any reports it deems necessary to the governor and DCF commissioner; and
3. assist in developing, reviewing, and commenting on DCF's strategic plan to meet the needs of children and families it serves.

DCF QUARTERLY REPORTS TO THE COUNCIL

The act requires DCF to provide quarterly reports on its progress promoting safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes, instead of quarterly reports on the department's progress carrying out its strategic plan. The reports must include the following:

1. outcome data categorized by race, ethnicity, age cohorts, departmental region and, where practicable, disability status and
2. other relevant information and data the council requests.

BACKGROUND

Children's Report Card

By law, the Children's Committee, in collaboration with the offices of Fiscal Analysis and Legislative Research and the Commission on Women, Children and Seniors, must maintain an annual report card that evaluates the progress of state policies and programs in promoting the result that all Connecticut children grow up in a stable living environment, safe, healthy, and ready to lead successful lives. The report must use data and primary indicators to measure the progress toward

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these results in a variety of areas (e.g., statewide rates of child abuse and poverty) (CGS § 2-53m).